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Feedback

Do You Pray for Spiritual Gifts? Here are Two Reasons Why You Should

Jeremy Bouma on March 7th, 2017. Tagged under Practicing the Power,Prayer,Sam Storms,Spiritual Gifts.

Jeremy Bouma

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Feedback

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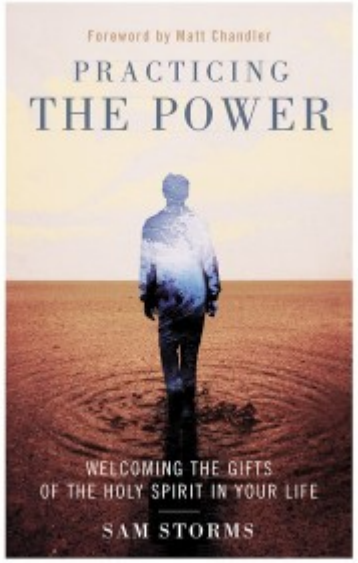
> Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. (1 Corinthians 14:1)



I would imagine many of us earnestly pursue the first part of Paul's exhortation to the Corinthian believers. Pursuin love we get, and probably seek more often than not. But earnestly desiring the gifts of the Spirit? And "especially" prophecy? Perhaps not as mucl

Yet Sam Storms urges in his new book *Practicing the Power* that this is exactly what we're called to do as Christians.

> the Holy Spirit wants to be pursued and will not be pushed. This is just another way of saying that if we want to see and experience the full range of spiritual gifts we must relentlessly seek them. (37)

But is this idea of pursuing the Spirit and his gifts biblical? Sure is, says Storms: "These verses tell us that it is not only permissible to seek the spiritual gifts—it is mandatory" (37).

And actually, he goes one step further: Not only are we to actively desire spiritual gifts, we're to actively *pray* for them—for two reasons.

The Bible Says You Should Pray for Spiritual Gifts

Storms begins his exhortation to pray for spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 14:1 and continues on to 1 Corinthians 12:11, where Paul writes, "All these [the gifts he outlines in vv. 8–10] are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines."

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Storms highlights the reality that the Spirit is the one who decides who gets what gifts. Not us. Yet we're told to "eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit." What gives? Here's how he explains it:

> Isn't it reasonable to think that if we are responsible for desiring spiritual gifts and the Spirit is responsible for distributing them, we should *ask* that he fulfill our desire by granting us the gifts we want to see manifest in our lives? I would suggest that the "desire" we feel for certain gifts is likely itself the fruit of the Spirit's work in our hearts. He desires (or wills) to grant us a gift (or gifts), which awakens in us a desire for the very thing he is determined to impart. (37–38)

So our desire for certain spiritual gifts originates with the Holy Spirit himself. Yet we have a responsibility to ask the Spirit to fulfill his originally implanted desire, imparting to us his willed gifts.

Here Storm draws our attention to 1 Corinthians 14:13, where Paul encourages the one who has the gift of tongues to pray for the gift of interpretation in order to edify the church—the point of all gifts in the first place.

It's Our Only Hope for the Use of Spiritual Gifts

To reinforce his point, Storms insists "there is little, if any, hope for the proper use of spiritual gifts apart from a focused and consistent commitment to praying." (45). Though most Christians would say they're committed to prayer, an active commitment to and engagement with *praying* is another story. Yet, "If you want your life to experience divine power, it needs to be a praying life" (45).

As James 4:2 reminds us, "You do not have because you do not ask God." Storms takes this in two ways: Not only is God pleased to be pursued to give us his spiritual gifts, pouring out his power in return to wonderfully, miraculously intervene in our lives. It is unlikely we will experience the supernatural operation of God's Spirit unless we embrace and practice prayer.

Of course, there's a counter argument to this insistence on praying for the operational use of spiritual gifts: the sovereignty of God. As the argume goes, if God designs and intends spiritual gifts to function in the church, then such gifts will operate irrespective of how we live, what we believe, whether we pursue such gifts through prayer.

Storm anticipates this argument, and responds:

> If we apply this way of thinking to other areas of life, why would we bother praying at all? Why pray if God is going to do what God is going to do regardless? *Que sera, sera!* Whatever will be, will be! (43)

He goes on to wonder why Jesus would have rebuked the disciples for failing to prayer when they attempted to exorcise the demon from the young boy if God had wanted the boy delivered anyway (Mark 9:28–29).

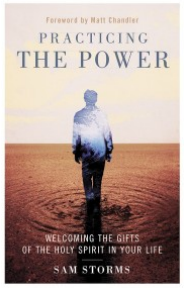
Storm believes when the manifestation of spiritual gifts is less present in church history, it's because Christians have not sought, pursued, and passionately prayed for them. "In other words, *they had not because they asked not, and they asked not because they believed not!*" (44).

***

"From the first day that I was awakened to the importance of spiritual gifts in the life of the church, prayer has had an irreplaceable role" (45)

Feedback

Storms hopes you will discover this same irreplaceable role of prayer in your pursuit and exercise of the Spirit's gifts.



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